



Guide to Coronavirus

Supporting elderly relatives at risk

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The prospect of many weeks, and possibly months of isolation during the coronavirus pandemic is causing enormous amounts of additional distress to the elderly.

The team at Age Space is doing all we can to provide you with practical help and advice to support elderly relatives at risk during this difficult time.

There's lots more info on our website, www.agespace.org. Together, we can get through these uncertain days and weeks.

Coronavirus FAQs

The practicalities of shielding elderly parents in isolation.

We've received many questions about individual circumstances and how best to cope with the 12 week isolation and social distancing imposed by the government. Here are some questions answered:

I live with my elderly father but have to go out to work. What should I do? You should only be leaving the home for work if it is absolutely vital and you can't work from home. Assuming this is the case, and your parent is not in the most vulnerable group of 1.5 million people identified by The Government, you need to keep a 2m distance inside the house. Make sure you wash your hands regularly - particularly when you re-enter the house from work. Cough/sneeze into your elbow. If your parent is in the most vulnerable group, then you should be in isolation together, except for any of the essential trips for food, medication and exercise.

Can I still go in to Mum's house to wash and dress her? If you are your Mum's carer, this is considered to be one of the four essential reasons to be able to leave your own home. You must try to observe the self-isolation measures in place. Wash your hands when you arrive, and if you can, wear surgical gloves and a face mask.

Could I visit my gran and sit outside with her for a chat? No-one should make any unnecessary trips from their home or visit anyone who lives in a different house during this period. If you care for your gran and visit as part of the care, you must practice social isolation, maintaining 2m distance between you, wash your hands when you arrive and when you leave, cough/sneeze into your elbow.

Is it okay to invite my healthy mum, who is over 70, to our house? No. No-one should make any unnecessary trips from their home or visit anyone who lives in a different house during this period. Instead, consider setting up a Skype call with her, or a WhatsApp group.

Can Dad still visit his allotment? Yes, this is considered one of the forms of daily exercises that everyone is encouraged to take.

Official advice and guidelines

If you haven't already done so, make sure you are aware of the advice and guidelines set out by the following sources:

- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- UK Government: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

And, of course, observe the following measures, which we have summarised here:

- Stay at home. Only leave the house for very limited, important purposes,
- Wash your hands often, when you enter your home or workplace, or after coughing or sneezing into a tissue,
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

Age Space Time Well Spent Plan
A plan for elderly parents for 12 weeks of isolation

Maintaining positive mental and physical well-being throughout this period is going to be a bit of a challenge for most of us, let alone those who are requested / required to stay at home.

Creating a new routine

No doubt your parents and elderly relatives have a routine already in place: but with the prospect of many days merging into each other and usual activities cancelled or significantly curtailed, existing routines will need to be amended. Having a routine is comforting, plus it provides a framework around which to build the rest of the day or week.

The best advice we have heard (from someone who spent months at a time, literally suspended in time, in a submarine) is: **make a routine now**, test it, write it down and stick to it. **Divide the day up into different segments** - daily chores, communications, exercise, rest, etc. With both of these in mind, the **Age Space Time Well Spent Plan** includes the following elements:

- #### 1. Daily Activities: main framework

These are the everyday things we all do: wash, make the bed, regular housework, cook and eat, etc. And where possible these should continue to be the bedrock of every day during the week, with time off for good behaviour at weekends of course!

2. Keeping connected and healthy

Time should be set aside every day: Skype chats with family, or Whatsapp chats with grandchildren; email/ phone chats with neighbours.

Staying healthy and well if you're not allowed to leave the home is difficult, particularly without your own outside space. Try and encourage a daily exercise slot in the calendar, whether for the body or for the mind.

There are no perfect solutions, but there is exercise for older people on BBC Breakfast three times a week thanks to the legendary Green Goddess; for the more adventurous there are a myriad of online / YouTube classes for yoga, pilates, and even Joe Wicks is running daily PE sessions (aimed at much smaller people - but might be fun - just be careful with the starjumps!).
- #### 3. Household/home projects

A long staycation at home lends itself perfectly to getting a few of those nagging 'chores' finally done: tidying out the kitchen cupboards, sorting through photographs, rightsizing the wardrobe, rummaging in the garden shed or garage.

4. A Coronavirus bucketlist

A Coronavirus bucketlist is not as gloomy as it might sound; rather a way of planning in new and interesting activities for elderly people:

 - Write a life story - fun for all the family: could also be recorded on a phone and sent to grandchildren
 - Doing a family tree
 - Learning a new language
 - List of books to read, share and discuss
 - Study a course
 - Visit a certain museum, virtually
 - Learn to cook a particular cuisine
 - Knitting, art, craft, etc.

Different activities can be divided into long-term, medium and one-off for the purposes of the calendar.

And remember, **don't be too over-ambitious at the start** - no-one likes a to-do list that never gets done. **This is a marathon, not a sprint**, so every activity or task should be taken at a leisurely pace. For example, taking time over an evening meal will have a number of benefits.

Supporting elderly relatives at home

In addition to the regularly updated general advice from The Government website, there is updated specialist advice regarding people living in care homes and receiving care from a care agency / provider in their own home.

Planning ahead with medication

If you don't already know, make a list of the regular medication your parent takes. Take advantage of the online prescription delivery services as getting to the GP in person is already difficult and is going to become more so.

The GP surgery should / will have an electronic prescription service. Online prescription and delivery services are available through providers including Boots, The Co-op and Pharmacy Online.

Keeping connected, busy, healthy and entertained

The reality of self-isolation for an elderly person who already lives alone is the primary concern. Whilst in regular times they may not go out very often, the self-imposed exile or quarantine makes it something entirely more worrying.

If at all possible, you will need to combine the best of tech with human solutions to stay connected. Daily emails or actual hand-written letters are such an easy way to connect. If your parents have a computer, tablet or smartphone, set up (and maybe conduct a bit of training) Skype or WhatsApp, so that you can have regular face-to-face chats. Perhaps you've got an old phone in a drawer, or a laptop you no longer use. Now is the time to get them connected!

Agree specified times of day, so that they can expect your call and get set up. To mix it up a bit, encourage other members of the family or friends to do the same.

Taking usual exercise may not be possible, but there are plenty of ways of **keeping healthy**. Walking around the garden every day is something, at least. Or perhaps indoor exercises for those without outside space. The NHS, for example, has videos and exercise plans for a range of needs. The BBC have also announced regular older age fitness programmes.

To **keep elderly relatives busy** at home, consider dusting off the DVD collection, or perhaps a Netflix subscription. We are creating a whole suite of 'top tens' on our website to help you and them access a range of entertainment, from virtual museum tours, live cinema streaming and the best box sets available.

Getting in supplies

You may already have reviewed the staples in the cupboard, freezer and fridge. We are all stocking up, but please not enough to clear the shelves in your local supermarket.

There are options to ensure quarantine due to Coronavirus, but this doesn't mean spam fritters three times a day! Local shops seem to have better supplies of some things. Shop local if you can. Many are now delivering food too.

#ViralKindness is the brilliant postcard available to print off and distribute for those who want to support their local community. It's a tickbox card for anyone needing support, being posted / emailed by local people.

Neighbourhood groups are springing up, along with websites such as Nextdoor.co.uk, so sign up, not just for your parents, but your own community too. It's going to be a massive team effort!

Online delivery services are currently under enormous pressure. Even if you can log in, many services don't have any free delivery slots. Consider sharing deliveries with neighbours, both with your parents and yourselves.

Other services you might want to consider include milk delivery from a local or national provider, some of whom also deliver groceries to the door. Many of these are also experiencing high demand. Don't give up.

Meal delivery services should also be considered. Currently, the Government and Local Authorities are working on plans to provide support for the most isolated, those with no local support.

With the closure of pubs, bars and restaurants, many have been able to start offering takeaway and delivery services. These are either directly, or through services such as Uber, Deliveroo, etc. Neighbourhood and local groups are already starting up meals on wheels and meal delivery services, as well as just cooking and sharing meals with neighbours and friends.



Supporting elderly relatives at home

The world wide web of opportunity

The internet and a smartphone would make a huge difference to your parents lives now if they have been reluctant to engage so far.

As we all know, there is so much stuff on the internet to keep people busy. From virtual museum tours to live streaming performances. More interactive are virtual choirs and health and fitness sessions. Many people are setting up new online services, so the range of choices diversifies every day!

Other options might include researching the family free, taking up a new hobby or learning a new skill - maybe a new language. Perhaps enrol on an online course with the University of the Third Age (U3A), or maybe play, or even learn bridge or other card games, online.

If it's not possible to go online, create a reading list and share books (either physical or audio books). This will help while away the days. How about starting a book club, or, in fact, any kind of club - wine, music, food?

A therapeutic and useful project would be a vegetable patch in either the garden, or if mobility is limited, raised beds, containers and garden pots.

Cash and paying bills

You may need to put in place solutions for access to cash for your parents. Or, as cards are increasingly the only currency in shops, you might need to ensure that they have the right card.



Preventing scammers

Unfortunately we are already seeing a rise in scams. Phone calls, emails and even doorknocking are on the rise. In the current climate, it is even more okay than normal for your parents to **HANG UP THE PHONE**, to **not answer the door** or to **delete the email**.

At the very least, they must **NEVER** give anyone any details of their bank accounts, passwords, etc. Even someone who says they are from the bank or building society. **NO-ONE, EVER**. You can find lots of useful information about preventing scams on our website.

Making a local plan to support elderly parents

Connecting with the street and community

- Contact the neighbours to see if there is a local email / WhatsApp / phone group that you or your parents can join,
- Some streets / areas are dividing up into groups, for example five homes, a smaller, tighter unit for people to help each other,
- Tell neighbours / locals what your parents need and make a timetable,
- Sign up for Nextdoor.co.uk, using your parents address, to access local info,
- #ViralKindness is a brilliant postcard that can be photocopied and distributed within communities, connecting those needing help with those happy to help.
- BBC local radio stations are establishing local resources, so it would be worth tuning in to the one local to your parents.



Ideas for local community spirit

Once everyone is connected, perhaps you can encourage more than 'needs must' communications, which might help your parents keep busy. Bake a cake for the street, or a regular bread order, perhaps... Start a book club, or, at distance, a street tea party.



Putting affairs in order

We may all be feeling pretty powerless and with little/no control over our future right now. And, while this is potentially the gloomiest of subjects, it would give elderly parents an element of control to put their affairs in order at this time.

Writing a Will / Letter of Wishes

Making decisions about money and other assets not only helps the family in the future, but can also help with planning for any care needs in the future. A letter of wishes is a great way of giving your thoughts as to how you'd like things to be done and for whom by your executors.

Power of Attorney

Everyone should have a Power of Attorney - personal welfare PoA for health / medical issues alongside a property and financial power of attorney to cover all money matters.



No-one wants to be in a muddle should they need urgent medical care, and very few want to leave a muddle for their family when they die. These are difficult conversations at the best of times, and shouldn't be rushed. But you may wish to consider the following:

Advance Care Plan or advance statement

A written document (not legally binding) setting out someone's wishes, beliefs, values and preferences about their future care.

Not to be confused with...

Advance Directive / Living Will

Legal document of wishes or decisions to refuse particular treatments or medications called an 'Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment' - or ADRT for short.

Not to be confused with...

Do Not Resuscitate Order

DNAR is a non-binding document containing wishes when not to be resuscitated.

Finally, and most importantly

If your elderly parents are on their own and in the high risk category, as notified by the NHS, they will be supported by community volunteers (still being rolled out) with shopping, medication, etc., in addition to any care they may already receive. Informal or paid for care visits should continue, but with distancing and protection measures already outlined – handwashing and sanitising, masks and gloves. Elderly parents should not leave the house during this period. If you are your parents carer and provide services such as dressing, shopping, then you can continue to do so, but observe all the distance rules.

And finally, should your elderly parents develop symptoms – dry cough, high temperature – the guidance is as follows: they or their carer should make contact with 111, or in an emergency dial 999. Should there be the chance of being hospitalised, pack a small bag, list medication and make a list of family and carers to keep informed.



Useful links to advice and services

Age Space Coronavirus Group

We have set up a Facebook group, 'Supporting Elderly Relatives at Risk of Coronavirus'. The group now has over 500 members, and we attempt to answer your questions and share useful info.

Link: facebook.com/groups/agespace

Age Space Coronavirus Hub

We have also added a dedicated Coronavirus section to our website. In it you will find a wealth of information on supporting elderly relatives during this crisis. We are adding to it and updating daily.

Website: www.agespace.org/coronavirus

NHS Guidance

Advice for everyone: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Electronic prescriptions: www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/pharmacies/electronic-prescription-service/

NHS 111: www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care/nhs-111/

gov.uk Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do: www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do

Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined as extremely vulnerable: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

#ViralKindness

#ViralKindness is a brilliant postcard that can be photocopied and distributed within communities, connecting those needing help with those happy to help. You can download it using the link below:

Download: drive.google.com/file/d/1L_8Go1zQ572fBZtElFfQZI9vNEwK7Rf/view

World Health Organisation

Public advice, technical guidance, rolling updates, travel advice and more from the World Health Organization on the Coronavirus disease Pandemic.

Website: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

There is more information on our website, www.agespace.org, on a much wider range of subjects. You can also join our forum and get involved in the conversation.